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## THE JEWS OF MOROCCO.

WHILE so much righteous indignation is being stirred up among us with regard to the barbarities daily chronicled in Russia, we are apt to overlook the condition of the Jews in Barbary itself. From time to time statements are made on behalf of the Jews of Morocco, and momentary interest is aroused, but ere long they seem again forgotten. Shall we wait until the treatment meted out under the *régime* of the Czar is imitated under that of the Sultan of the Maghreb ? Or shall we, by united effort and by timely zeal, prevent the arrival of such a crisis ? Which were better, to be snatched from drowning or to be kept from danger ? It is seven-and-twenty years since the mission of Sir Moses Montefiore to Marrákesh obtained some slight concessions to the Jewish subjects of the Sultan, for which they have been ever thankful ; but there is much more to be done. Bad as the position of the Moor himself is, under a rotten Government, that of his Israelitish neighbour is much worse, and ever will be till the Morocco rulers learn that even Jews have friends, and powerful ones, and that many of themselves are powerful. With a new generation the memories of the Montefiore Mission have passed away, and though the whole policy of the Moorish Government and its attitude towards foreigners have undergone changes for the better during the past quarter of a century, there is still much to be done. At the same time, the fact must not be overlooked that no royal or imperial rescripts, no Shereefian firmans, can afford the Morocco Jews the friendship or respect which they would fain experience. Nothing but their own behaviour can secure them these, and it will be long before the evil impressions of ages can be removed.

For a right appreciation of the present position and

future prospects of these communities some idea of their past history is needful. Though of course of one common stock, they are divided into two distinct classes, the one being formed of the descendants of those who first settled in Morocco, now to be found in their unmixed state only in the interior, chiefly in the Atlas. The other class consists of those who emigrated to Morocco when in the fifteenth century zeal-mad Spain expelled her Jewish subjects. Those who took refuge on the Moorish coast soon absorbed their co-religionists in their neighbourhood, and gave rise to what is to-day the more cultured and important section of the two. It will be well, therefore, to consider them separately before drawing any general conclusion applicable to the whole, though it is as one body that after all they appear to their rulers and the outside world. The main distinction has ever been the language, for while the one has spoken Berber and Arabic, the other has spoken Spanish and Arabic. The proportion who speak both Berber and Spanish—always with the intermediary Arabic—is microscopic, if it exists at all. As in other countries, the Jews of Morocco have shown themselves apt linguists, ever ready to master French or English in addition to their mother tongues, but the special facilities afforded in favour of the former in some towns enable it to be spoken the more correctly. The lads in the Tangier schools put the majority of English boys to shame with their assiduity and perseverance in this respect. The merest smattering is turned to the best account in practice upon visitors, till the progress made is often astonishing.

#### HISTORY.

How far back to date the first arrival of Israelites in that part of Barbary which we call Morocco, I am at a loss to say, though no doubt some of the diligent historical delvers, who bring so much of interest to light through the pages of this Review and kindred publications,

may be able to inform us. My researches have lain rather among such materials as during six years on the spot have come to hand in daily intercourse with my subject, than among dusty tomes and worm-worn pages. The people themselves have no intelligent idea of their past, beyond that at some stage or other their ancestors hailed from the Holy City. Some have opined that one of the earlier dispersions sent them forth, and doubtless there are in Morocco a few descended thus; but from the completeness of the teachings in their possession, it is evident that the bulk of the immigrants belonged to a later period.

The utmost I can attempt to do is to bring together a few scattered data gleaned from various sources, which, with no pretence at completeness, may serve as beacon lights along their history. The earliest authentic references I have come across are in connection with the invasion of the Arabs cir. 670 C.E., who found Jews already established in Morocco. Several references to this fact occur among the native historians, but one of the most curious is by Ibn Khaldoon, who says that in the year 688 the Berbers were allied against the Arabs under a queen named Dhimmeah el Kahánah, or the Tributary Sooth-sayer, who belonged to *the Jewish tribe of Jerooa*, of the Aures mountains. Where these are I know not, but the designation "tributary" is that always applied to a Jew in Moorish legal documents, instead of the national appellatives, Yahoodí or Hebrání, the former of which is in conversation applied to the people, and the latter to their language. Similar allusions in various quarters show that a goodly number of Jews must even at that early date have found their home in Morocco. In one of the legends which recount in so many ways the founding of Fez, about 807 C.E., a native Jew plays his part, and as soon as the town began to rise, a number of Jews took refuge there, and were allotted a quarter to themselves, on the payment of tribute of 30,000 dinars a year in lieu of military service. This tax continues to be levied, not

only in Fez, but throughout the kingdom, though of course the sum has increased very many times during these centuries. Owing to the present Sultan's generosity this tax has been paid very irregularly, and is much in arrear in some parts.

In 1275 the mob rose against the Jews of Fez, and fourteen had already been slain when the Ameer, riding to the spot himself, succeeded in quelling the tumult. He forbade any Moor to approach the Jewish quarter, and next morning laid the foundation stones of New Fez, in which he accorded them the district they still inhabit. Previous to this time it would seem from the record called Raod el Kártas (the Garden of Documents) that their home was in the centre of the old town, for in 1133, when the famous Karueein Mosque was enlarged, the adjoining property of certain Jews had to be seized and paid for at a valuation. The quarters thus allotted to their Jewish subjects by the Moorish Sultans after a time became known either as the Mellah (place of salt), or as the Missoos (the saltless place). The former designation is explained by the fact that the Jewish butchers are forced to pickle the heads of rebels which are to be exhibited according to custom above the gates of the towns as a warning to others. The latter name is given in derision, saltlessness and worthlessness being terms proverbially synonymous.

It is probable that the Jewish inhabitants of Morocco have never been free from a certain amount of oppression,<sup>1</sup> and that from the first they have had to suffer indignities which have long been regarded from both sides as matters of course. Under the heading of the present condition of the Moorish Jews an opportunity will be afforded of dealing further with these indignities, of which too many still exist, as also with the causes or excuses for some of them.

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<sup>1</sup> For the persecutions of the Jews of Moiocco and of North Africa generally, during the reign of Abd Allah bin Toomert, cir. 1146, see Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, VI. 170.

Whether any of the Jews expelled from Italy in 1342, from Holland in 1350, from France and England about 1400, found refuge in Morocco, with most of those expelled from Spain in 1492,<sup>1</sup> and from Portugal two years later, I must leave others to determine, but it is very likely that to them some of the Moroccan families owe their origin. Those who sought shelter with the Moors from the outset suffered treatment hardly better than that which had driven them forth, and the story of their sufferings is a harrowing one.

## PAGES OF HONOUR.

In spite of the subservient position enforced upon these "Tributaries" by their cousins, the Arabs, their inherent cleverness was no less manifest in Barbary than elsewhere, and those who oppressed them also took care to avail themselves of their business qualities. At times the rulers of the Empire drew their chief advisers from this race. The influential posts once held by Jews under the Moorish dominion of Spain, and the renown of many of their learned men during that period of comparative enlightenment, are sufficiently known to need no recapitulation here; but it may be well to recall the names of some of the famous Israelitish diplomats of the Moorish Empire in Africa. Their most prosperous time in Morocco itself would seem to have commenced soon after the expulsion from Spain, and it was doubtless the arrival of so many men of higher training and superior ability which secured them these posts. Shoomel-el-Barensi was one of the first to rise to power, as Minister of the Ameer Saïd-el-Watas, who reigned during the first quarter of the sixteenth cen-

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Graetz, *ibid.*, VIII. (ed. 3, 1890), p. 360, *seq.*, gives a full account of the Jews who found an asylum on the Berber Coast in 1391, as also in 1492. In Fez exiles at the latter date were well received by Mulai Sheikh, though the populace at first was unfavourably disposed to them. A general survey of the Jews in Morocco is given in the opening chapter of Graetz's ninth volume.

tury ; and his influential position opened the court of Fez to many a co-religionist. This was the hey-day of the Moorish Jews, as one after another of their number became a sort of privy councillor, notably during the reign of Mohammed VIII., in 1576. As controllers of finances the successive Sultans had the same experience of them as have European potentates, but they also employed them as ambassadors. In 1610 Shoomel-el-Farráshí was sent by Mûlái Zeedán as his representative to the United Provinces, and he was succeeded in 1675 by Yooséf Toledano, whose brother Haím was Ambassador to England. Few ever exercised more power in the Moorish Court than did the favoured Maïmaran at the close of the seventeenth century, without whose money and influence the brutal Mûlái Ismâïl would never have reached the sultanate. Though he virtually ruled his poorer brethren, he had a formidable rival in Moses Ben Attar, whose inhumanities rivalled those of his master. It is this man's signature which appears as Moorish plenipotentiary at the foot of the treaty with Great Britain of 1721, which was the basis of every subsequent agreement with European nations, and also laid the foundation of the Protection system. It is a curious and interesting fact that a Jew should have, on the Moorish side, permitted the entrance of the thin end of a wedge which has since entered so much further as to have become not only the *sine quâ non* of intimate European relations with Morocco, but also the one hope of the Jews in the country almost ever since that time. But Ben Attar's competitor Maïmaran offered the Sultan so many coins for his head, and the millionaire Moses of those days, being informed of the bid, offered twice as much to reverse the bargain, which then became his ; but the Sultan, having pocketed both sums, commanded the two he could so ill spare to become friends, Maïmaran to give his daughter to Ben Attar, who henceforth stood supreme. An instance of both his power and his cruelty was afforded on the occasion of the British

Embassy of 1720, when he had his Gibraltar agent brutally maltreated and all but strangled for cheating, without the interference of any other authority, or the semblance of a trial.

In 1750 the Morocco Ambassador to Denmark was a Jew, and thirty years later Yakoob ben Ibráheem, of Bení Idder, came to London in the same capacity, being succeeded in 1794 by one named Zumbal, who had been in charge of the Sultan's finances, and was high in favour. St. Olon had found him thus when he went to Marrákesh as envoy from France just afterwards. Yakoob Attar, who acted as secretary to Mohammed X., had the credit of speaking English, French, Spanish and Italian—presumably in an original style—and of being a great rogue. In 1859 an English Jew from York was captain of the port at Mogador, and it is stated that one Sultan had a Jewish cook.

To-day, though no son of Israel holds office of note under the Sultan, many of those whose parents enjoyed European protection, and who have become to a greater or less extent Europeanized, occupy positions of influence, both among natives and foreigners, such as hardly a single Moor has attained.

#### FOLK LORE AND FACT.

There exist among the Moors a number of curious traditions concerning tribes among the Berbers who are affirmed to have once been Jews. Unfortunately these are too fragmentary and too scattered to be of any real service till they have been collated, compared and condensed by some painstaking student of Folk Lore. To such an one there is little doubt that they would yield abundant interest, and at the same time furnish historic clues of importance. In a similar way other tribes in the Anti-Atlas are reported to have once been Christian, and an entangled series of myths is current about them all. To unravel the most prominent would be a worthy undertaking, but a toilsome labour of love.

This question as to the presumed Jewish origin of certain tribes is of itself most interesting, and there is probably some foundation for it. One writer states that Mûlâï Edrees, the founder of Fez, was considered a saint because he secured the conversion of so many Jews to Islam. The unfortunate Davidson, who rashly attempted to cross the Atlas unprepared, half a century ago, and lost his life in consequence, was told of such a tribe who betrayed their origin by their features, and who, according to the Arabs, had a Jewish odour about them. They engaged in commerce only, or acted as clerks, and although Mohammedans, never attained to high civil or religious positions, nor did they observe the Friday as the "Day of the Congregation."

Side by side with these rather doubtful reports of conversions is a series of accounts of advantage taken of some thoughtless word to inflict punishments for presumed apostasy. In 1820 a Jew, in a tipsy condition, was caught entering a mosque, and was induced to testify belief in the Divine mission of Mohammed. Realising, when sober, next day, what he had done, he went to the governor to explain the matter, but word being sent to the Sultan that he had recanted, the answer came, "On the arrival of the courier, off with the Jew's head and send it to me." Within half an hour after the message arrived the head was on its way to Court in a leather bag.

The story of Sol Hachuel is far more touching, and is, indeed, one of genuine heroism. Two Moorish women swore, in 1834, that this Hebrew girl, who had fled to them on account of domestic troubles, had agreed to "resign herself" to the will of God as taught by Mohammed. After imprisonment for some time, she was sent to Court, and her extreme beauty obtained for her a promise of the imperial hareem with every honour, if she would but confirm her presumed change of creed. But her noble courage brought her to a martyr's death, for she was beheaded outside Fez.

It is hardly possible that this sort of thing should be

repeated now, though theoretically the same threats exist for the pervert from the faith of Islam. Richardson, writing in 1859, tells a story, then fresh, of a Jewish lad, who went to his Kaïd and proclaimed himself Mohammedan, but this official, with greater sense than usual, sent him to prison till next day, when he had him beaten and sent back home. In reply to King John of England, whom a well-known ecclesiastical historian<sup>1</sup> states to have appealed to Morocco for help against Louis and the Pope,—offering to hold his kingdom in fief from Morocco, and to embrace Islam—the Sultan En-Náser expressed a similar sentiment. “I have read a book in Greek by a Christian sage named Paul,” he told one of the ambassadors,<sup>2</sup> “whose words and doings greatly pleased me, but what displeased me was that he left the religion in which he was born. I say as much to the king, your master, who now wishes to leave the Christian law, so holy and so pure. God knows —He who is ignorant of nothing—that if I was without religion I would choose it in preference to any other.” But Mûlái En-Náser overlooked the fact that Paul accepted Jesus as the promised Messiah because he was born and remained a Jew; that to become a Christian one must become a Jew by religion first, and that to become Mohammedan great portions of the teachings of both must be accepted. Mohammed held his creed to be the natural outcome of Christianity as we Christians consider our creed the fulfilment of Judaism.

A set of traditions, perhaps more curious than those of desertions from the Jewish ranks, exists to account for the earliest peopling of the country itself. Authors, too many to quote, tell of legends that Morocco welcomed the nations whom Joshua drove out of Canaan, and from Procopius downwards they have offered proofs in the shape of pillars with inscriptions, and stories handed down without them, but hitherto all these have failed to prove their case,

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Paris.<sup>2</sup> Robert of London, a priest.

although it may nevertheless have some foundation in fact.

#### PRESENT CONDITION.

Morocco is an absolutely non-statistical country ; for this reason it is altogether impossible to arrive at any conclusion as to the actual numbers of the Moorish Jews, or even as to the proportion which they bear to the population of the country. Even if one endeavours to mentally form an idea, it is an impossibility to do so without an intimate acquaintance with every town of the Empire, for they are much more numerous in one part than in another, and even their agglomeration in one town often means their sparsity in its immediate neighbourhood. In Tangier, the advantages afforded by the presence of so many foreigners, by the opportunities for trade, and, above all, by the comparative immunity from the indignities inflicted further inland, have all tended to allure considerable numbers, and to keep them there. For these reasons it is probable that, out of some 25,000 inhabitants, of whom some 5,000 are Europeans (there are 3,500 Spaniards and 500 British subjects on their respective Consular registers), as many as 7,000 or 8,000 are Israelites. Mogador, which ranks second to Tangier as a busy port, takes the same position with regard to its Jewish population. It has been estimated by men well able to judge that the average proportion of the Jewish inhabitants of the towns is one-fourth ; though out in the country, with the exception of the Atlas district, it is only under the protection of powerful governors, few and far between, that little colonies of the peculiar people thrive. The largest settlement is naturally found in the largest city, Fez, the dwellers in which are reckoned at 150,000, including, perhaps, 30,000 Jews.

With the exception of the ports of Tangier, Arzila, Casablanca, Mazagan, and Saffi, every town, and almost every hamlet, has its Jewish quarter, wherein alone, enclosed by gates at night, the sons of Israel are allowed to

live. The sacred city of Zerhôn they and all foreigners are prevented from even approaching, and in Wazzán they live in rookeries on sufferance. It is curious that, in 1834, they were not to be found in Saffi or Agadeer. Perhaps the fanaticism concomitant with the veneration in which the rabat, or camp, of the former port is held had something to do with that case. It was only in the end of the last century that Chenier, when representing France there, broke the spell, as it were, by boldly riding through on horseback, where Jews and foreigners were previously compelled to stumble bare-foot. It should be remembered that, till within the last fifty years, "Christians"—a term which in Morocco is equivalent to "foreigners"—and Jews were classed together and treated alike. It is only awe of the superior power of the former which has secured them the privileges they now enjoy. Even to this day, unrecommended foreigners are forced to dwell in the Jewries of the interior and some of the ports, no Muslim daring to take them in without an order. In certain places, Jews who can afford it dwell outside the Mellah, in the portion allotted to Europeans, but this is not possible everywhere. In the country, several districts are reported to be without Jewish inhabitants, such as the Berber tribes of Benî M'teer, Benî M'gild, Benî Waghaïn, Aït Yoossî, Zemmoor Shilh, and Zâir.

#### THE ATLAS JEWS.

Of these, who speak only Berber, we have yet very much indeed to learn. There are stories current about agricultural colonies dwelling beyond the Atlas, which, if true, would add a further interest to an already fascinating subject. The man who has given to the world the most complete account of the peoples of that district, meagre as it is, is De Foucauld, the prince of Morocco explorers, the only one worthy of the name. From him we know that the customs observed in comparatively well-known dis-

tricts with regard to them extend to the whole of the vast area embraced by the Great and Lesser Atlas. Their condition there varies between that of serfs and slaves. Sometimes they are practically the property of the local sheikh, and at others they belong to private individuals, who have the right to sell them. They are not only compelled to do much without payment, but they are imposed upon at every turn. They may not marry, nor remove their families, till they have, to all intents and purposes, re-bought themselves. All this is inflicted in the name of protection, without which they would not be safe for a day. Yet some five-and-twenty shillings has been considered sufficient blood money for one of these unfortunates. On the other hand, outsiders are permitted to do them no injury, which would be considered as inflicted upon their protector, who makes the duty of revenging it a point of honour. Disputes of this nature between powerful men not infrequently lead to intertribal quarrels. In travelling it is sufficient for the *protégé* to bear some article belonging to his master to ensure his safety, written documents being scarce up there, with few to understand them. The treatment that individuals receive depends entirely on the temper and the pleasure of their masters, for their chance of redress for injury is practically *nil*, so that their position is in some respects worse even than that of negro slaves, who, being Mohammedans, may benefit from certain rights in law, denied to those who spurn their Prophet. Centuries of this oppression have naturally had a very deleterious effect upon the characters of the victims, who are cringing, cowardly creatures, never daring to answer back, and seldom even standing erect—a people demanding our utmost pity.

#### DAILY INDIGNITIES.

From the day of his birth till all trace of his last resting-place has disappeared, the Hebrew of Morocco is despised and scorned. "Dog of a Jew!" is a very mild term to be

employed in abusing him, and the soubriquets of “ass!” and “swine!” stand in equal favour. But the various indignities to which his race is exposed in daily life differ too much in one district from what they are in another for any complete list to apply universally. I shall, therefore, only attempt to take notice of the chief, with the exception of those specially connected with the serfdom of the Atlas, dealt with already. The enforced collection in Mellahs, except round Tangier, outside which they may acquire no lands or property, has been noted. As at times the Moors have made raids upon the riches concentrated in these Mellahs, the gates are strictly shut and watched at night for their protection. In the day-time, in most towns, except on the coast, they can only leave their quarter barefoot, and until recently they could not ride in towns, and outside only on mules, with the exception of the Hazzán (Rabbi). Before certain Mosques they must always remove their shoes, and formerly this was incumbent also upon the women, till Müláï Sulaïmán exempted them, in the words of a quaint writer, “because it was indecent and disturbing to devotion to see their tremendous calves.” To leave the country, the men used to have to pay \$4 and the women \$100, and sometimes the departure of the latter is still prohibited. The compulsory dress is considered also an indignity, which is fast being laid aside in favour of European ugliness, when foreign protection is obtained. Müláï Âbder Rahman objected to this, and once ordered all dressed as foreigners to be stripped and put in black again, a colour no Moor ever wears in any garment. It is most unfortunate that the younger ladies on the coast are so misinformed as to reject their own becoming costumes to such an extent as they do, in favour of hideous Parisian fashions, not to be compared for beauty or grace with that worn by their mothers. Many of the elder members of the community are conservative enough to retain the time-honoured style, but their juniors think they know better.

For an unprotected Jew to lift his hand against or curse

a Moor would be to bring down untold vengeance on his head. Yet in the Muslim Courts they may tender no evidence on oath—nor may the foreigners—so that they are obliged by *force majeure* to put up with whatever is inflicted on them. At one time the slightest retaliation meant death to the avenger, however he might have been provoked, except by violation of domicile. While in Tangier considerable laxity of these restrictions is allowed, in other parts they are much more severe, and every day unlucky Jews are punished for imaginary offences or out of pure spite. Lack of civility to a Moor, or outbidding him on the market becomes an offence, and an attempt to seek the aid of strangers an unpardonable crime.

In addition to the poll-tax, it has always been customary for the Jewish subjects of the Sultans to present them with specially valuable offerings on the occasions of family festivals. Though these continue, they are not now the irksome impost which they once were. A century ago, the usual thing was, on the birth of a son to the Emperor, to contribute gold pendants and earrings set with pearls, with gold plates bearing as inscriptions prayers in favour of mother and child. The value of this jewellery was estimated in 1715 at £15, a much more considerable sum in those days and in that country than it represents to us—and as Mûlâï Ismael was credited with some 900 sons, and received this amount for each, as well as similar articles in silver (minus the pearls) for some 300 daughters, he must have reaped a considerable harvest in this field alone. Forced labour, and the most unreasonable levies of manufactured goods, have also been frequently inflicted on this much-suffering people. In public works, such as the building of the walls of Mequinez and Tetuan, we have it on record how they, by the side of the European slaves were compelled to toil unpaid. When Mûlâï Ismael was besieging Ceuta during a space of many months, he was wont to make the Jews supply the powder used on Fridays, when they did the chief cannonading.

## COSTUME.

The peculiar dress to which unprotected male Jews in Morocco are confined, consists outwardly of a dark blue or black gaberdine of a sort of felt cloth, embroidered with narrow silk braid of the same hue, in which is worked on the right-hand side a distinctive badge almost identical with that once worn in England. Below this garment are visible the ankles—bare or clad in white stockings—thrust into black slippers, while the Moors wear yellow, a colour which, in common with all other bright hues, is strictly forbidden to the sons of Israel. At the throat a bit of white, or what was so once, is visible, and the sleeves, tight when buttoned, may be flapping loosely open. The face, a characteristic one, often pox-marked—though not so often as among the Moors—will be surmounted in the North by a proverbially greasy skull-cap, black, of course, while abundant locks crop out all round, left long, and forming a most unintellectual-looking fringe in front. Mourning customs are in this respect most strictly adhered to. In the south, peculiar bunches of curly, almost “frizzly” hair, adorn each temple, and this is a distinctive feature of one of the tribes of alleged Jewish origin, the Oodáïà, now the royal body-guard. Here, also, the cap is replaced by a blue cotton handkerchief spotted with white, which is folded corner-wise, with the ends tied under the chin, giving a most “old-womanish” appearance, far from prepossessing. This costume is varied considerably in the Atlas, where a hooded cloak of one piece, identical with that worn by many Moors, is much in vogue, thrown back over the left arm, and, of course, everywhere there are deviations from these costumes, down to shirt and drawers alone, or rags and tatters.

The dress of the women affords the most extreme of contrasts. At home, in the morning, it is of the dirtiest and most slovenly—skirt and bodice, not unlike the European

equivalents, but the latter often very low and loose. On high days and holidays the gorgeous attire worn by the same individual will be overwhelming in value and brightness. Rich dark velvets, loaded with gold braid, form the costume, while the hair of a married woman, which the public may never see, is enveloped from the forehead in an expensive Lyons silk kerchief, bedizened with costly jewellery, as also are neck and wrists. A whole fortune is sometimes invested in these inalienable chattels, which, from their value, often develop into heirlooms. The free use of antimony to darken the eyelashes far from enhances their undisputed good looks in European eyes.

Among the Berbers, the dress of the women sometimes so nearly resembles that of Muslimhas as to deceive even a native when a stranger. I have a lively recollection of the sudden change of my servant's language from courtesy to vituperation when he discovered one day in an Atlas village that he was addressing Jewesses instead of Mooresses, as he had supposed.

#### CUSTOMS.

For one who has the misfortune to be classed with the Goïm to attempt any detailed comparison of the method of performing the religious ceremonies of Israel followed in Morocco with the better known kindred rituals of other lands, would be presumption. I would rather refer those specially interested to accounts I published some years ago in *The Times of Morocco*, which merely set forth in order such facts as I had been able to observe or glean from inquiry. Subsequent experience would, it is true, necessitate considerable additions and some corrections, but they may serve to convey an intelligent idea.

The synagogues of Morocco are, on the whole, despicable, but only on a par with the habitations of the worshippers. I have visited many, but they have a wearisome sameness. I speak now of the typical ones, with no reference to the

fine modern buildings erected by public subscription or by private liberality in some of the coast towns, as for instance the New Synagogue on Tangier Wall, next door to my home, or that of the Messrs. Nahon, close by. I may point out here, *en passant*, that the position of the former Jewry of Tangier is fairly well determined by the fact that the street into which the latter opens, tenanted entirely by Jews, contains no less than seven synagogues. One of these is the oldest in the town, on the other side of which are three more, and there is a small one outside the Walls. Most of these are merely private houses, fitted up for worship, which is not unusual. The segregation of the women in the galleries is general, and in some towns the women veil themselves in the streets somewhat like the Mooresses, but they are poor attendants of the house of God as a rule. Several of these synagogues are small, with labyrinthine entrances, some passing through dwellings, and are distressingly odoriferous. The accommodation on the great feast days is so very inadequate that numbers of the congregation have to stand in the street outside. In other towns the condition of things is often very much worse, the houses of prayer serving also to sleep, eat, and kill chicken in, not to mention cooking and trade. I never saw more neglected places in actual use than in Marrákesh (Morocco City) and Amzmiz, the latter a town on the slopes of the Atlas. As a rule the Shochet performs his duties in the poultry line at street corners and other public places, where the interesting preliminaries may be studied gratis. However carefully the slaughtered bird is handed to the bright-eyed maid who stands there to receive it, the final struggles often prove too much for her, and it is dropped to flap about among the passers by, or the operator holds it under his foot as he examines his blade, and prepares for action again.

The visits of the Mohel are made occasion for the most prodigal feasting, and a still more prodigal display of female attire and jewellery, as well as of female adiposity

and flashing eye. The chair belonging to the community being set up on one side of the courtyard or balcony, the other side is thronged with lady spectators, as the venerable Rabbi, who combines so many functions, initiates the scion of the house to Judaism, always performing the *meziza*. In some instances the birth of a daughter serves for little less rejoicing. It is the invariable custom for the mother to lie in bed in state to receive her guests, for in Morocco no distinction is known between bed and sitting-room.

But the weddings! If money is foolishly wasted in London to make a grand affair of these, the Morocco brethren are not one whit behind. The Arabs are credited with a proverb in which there lies much truth, to the effect that while the Muslim squanders his substance in religious festivals, and the Christian in lawsuits, the Israelite does so in nuptial bouts. What shall I say of the days of preparation, of the breaking of a jar of corn at the door of the bride's room to ensure her fruitfulness, of the slaughter of cattle and sheep and fowls, of the synagogue service, of festivities at the bride's house, of the jollifications at that of the bridegroom, of the special bathing, of the customs and fun of the *talamo*, of the torchlight procession of the lady to her new home, of her induction in state by two of the most important male guests, of her sitting for hours like a waxen doll, of her stealthy tears from beneath closed eyes, of the binding forms and ceremonies, of the nasal chant, and irregular chorus, of the reading and the signing of the settlement, of the exchange of the ring, of the drinking of wine and the breaking of the glass, or of the thousand and one minor observances which vary indefinitely here, there, and then? Suffice it to say that on every hand hospitality abounds; that in place of the hard boiled eggs—two a-piece—which are customary at the Melah and minor ceremonies, luxurious repasts are spread and include a series of excellent almond sweets with preserved and dried fruits, of which each guest takes away a kerchief full; and that for drinks there are good

wines and bad, with abundance of villainous anis-seed and fig spirit, while the utmost good humour prevails, even though there is hardly standing room, and the din of the seldom-ceasing native music necessitates abnormal exercise of lung. So they get married in Barbary.

Their well-attended funerals, too, are imposing sights and sounds, for the sonorous chanting of a procession of male voices as they slowly pace to their special graveyard is very beautiful. Transported from their homes where the hired mourners wail, in coffin-like biers, the property of the community, they are buried in shrouds under horizontal stones some eighteen inches thick, which a Moor once suggested to me were made thus heavy by the heirs to keep the dead one quiet in his grave! The Habra is an institution in full work in Barbary, and after burial at stated times the women shriek upon the tombstones, but especially at the feast of Tammuz, when a whole night is spent in camp there. The customs of Bar Mitzvah and Pidyon Habben are also generally recognised.

#### RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS.

In proportion as the conditions of life in Morocco approximate the more to those under which the Mosaïc festivals were instituted, it will be understood that so much is their observance more literal, and altogether more primitive. In this consists a special charm. Probably no Israelitish communities are more strict in the fulfilment of their ceremonial duties than the one now under consideration. In more ways than one their ritual is allied to, and in some parts is identical with that of the Spanish and Portuguese congregations in other lands, a considerable proportion of them being of the same origin. A whole volume might be written on this point alone, but it must suffice to glance in passing at a few of the special features of the greater fasts or festivals. Nowhere could the Sabbath be more strictly adhered to than among these

people, and on Fridays everything is "redded up." The shalet—containing the Sabbath meals—is prepared over a carefully built fire, to keep it hot for twenty-four hours, with the seuda shilishit, or food for the third meal snug down at the bottom of the jar.

Yôm Kippur is a great day in Morocco, duly observed with groans and lamentations in the Synagogues, by the slaughter of fowls for sacrifice, and by repairing to the largest body of water available to pray for forgiveness and often to cast in stones as they would cast away their sins. The fasting is general, and on the conclusion of the Day of Atonement the Birkhat ha lavana is performed in open spaces on the way home.

The Feast of Tabernacles sees its Succah in or on top of every house, frequently gay with evergreens and flowers, real or artificial; and the subsequent Simhat Torah is kept with the greatest of show and excitement, while the daily use of etrôg and loolav, and the processions of the Sepharim give quite a gay appearance to the synagogues.

During the Feast of Hanuca or Dedication, a curious form of the special lamp is used, with a representation of the seven-branched candlestick on the back. A peculiar fritter called sfinj, or in Spanish banuelo, is sold about the streets during this week.

Purim is duly taken advantage of by beggars of all sorts for themselves and for charitable purposes, in subscribing to which the Jews of Morocco are not backward, and the payment of the *half shekel* is not forgotten. While the Megilla is being read in the synagogue the boys rap the seats vigorously with wooden hammers when the name of Haman occurs. At this time visits are made at dusk *incognito*, and presents of sweetmeats and fruits are sent from house to house on trays. Shushan Purim is also observed.

But Pesach, after all, is *the* feast, withal a fast. The preparatory search for leaven and the Serifat Hekhamis is most diligent and careful, and the care exercised in the

growing of the wheat and the selection of the water for the Mazzoth are almost superstitious. Space prevents my entering upon the well-known detail of the solemn Seder, with its shoulder of lamb and its bitter herbs, its unleavened cakes and its wine, though in many points it doubtless differs in Morocco from that of Europe, and is altogether more primitive. The "reception" on the last day of everybody by everybody else is a notable occasion over there. And on the same day they have in some parts a curious custom of going to the sea to say the Kaddesh and the Tephilot. During the Feast some Jewish confectioners "sell" the keys of their shops to Moors, to repurchase them afterwards.

The Feast of Weeks is marked by few peculiar customs, except the reading of the prayers called *Azharoth* in the synagogue at noon, a verse each by members of the congregation. If any one is caught tripping he is made to correct himself, and on going out has water thrown at him. Another observance of this feast is for the young folk to mount their roofs and syringe the passers-by with the same liquid, whence this is sometimes spoken of as the "water feast." The sea-bathing season then commences.

#### SOCIAL CONDITION.

In each community intermarriage of the various families has rendered the relationships between the members complex and confusing. Often unions take place which must be bugbears to genealogists, as once when a young lad puzzled me greatly by referring to a certain individual as uncle and grandfather indiscriminately, for it seemed that his grandfather had married his aunt in-law. Divorce is not difficult to obtain under certain conditions, but the husband seems always to retain some semblance of authority. I believe that bigamy is also legal though uncommon. The greatest evil, however, is the system of child marriages. These take place in the interior from the ages

of six or eight, the "wife" coming to live with her "husband" at his parents' home. At twelve or so she may be a mother, but very many lose their lives at this critical stage. If the lad has got tired of her ere this, and he is rich while she is poor, he will put her away in favour of some one else. As a set-off against all this, the Jews of Morocco set a good example to their Muslim neighbours in the general level of their morals, and as a result the national skin diseases of the Empire are but rare among them, though they are cruelly libelled by the Moors, who accuse them of having introduced them when they came from Spain. In habits of drinking, nevertheless, they lead the way, and teach the Moors this vice. The Sabbath afternoon to the poorer classes means invariable drunkenness, and a well-known Hebrew gentleman of Tangier, in explaining to me the Passover ceremonies, concluded by saying "then they all fall about drunk, and lie till morning."

In matters of food no one could be more particular. In large communities there are special Jewish markets, where Kosher viands may be obtained, while even water-barrels bear this word emblazoned on the ends. The preparations for Passover take the place of spring cleaning, and are very thorough, including even whitewashing outside, while old crocks are broken and new ones brought out. The streets of the Jewish quarters are the filthiest of all the Moorish towns, and are often several feet deep in rubbish, so that visitors descend by steps into the houses. Ceremonial washings are, of course performed, but otherwise water is not beloved. Interpreting for a doctor one day to a Moorish Jew suffering from a skin complaint, I had to ask how often he bathed, which brought out the indignant answer "Me wash? Of course I don't, except three or four times a year. Otherwise I only wash my face and hands sometimes. Oh dear no." The Moors, when rain is scarce, make the Jews go out with them to pray, and with but scant justice declare that they shall stop outside the walls till

their reeking breath and feet shall so annoy the Almighty, that he shall grant their prayers to get rid of them ! It is striking to see how readily those who become more cultured on the coast adopt the European standard in respect of cleanliness.

## SUBSISTENCE.

Although the possible existence of agricultural Jews in the unknown parts of the Atlas has been hinted at, the means of obtaining a livelihood followed by the Israelites of Morocco do not differ greatly from those adopted in other lands similarly situated. As artificers they are conspicuous in the manufacture of jewellery, and of brass, tin and metal work generally ; in the embroidering of slippers, etc. ; in tailoring and in carpentry, as also in the preparation of a number of useful and ornamental articles produced by the Moors as well. As merchants and shopkeepers, a large proportion of the trade of the country passes through their hands. Perhaps it would be no exaggeration to state that the larger proportion does so, first and last, much of that which is eventually retailed by Moors having been imported by them. In this special branch they probably do as much as Europeans and Moors together, though in exports the Europeans rank first.

It is, however, where the handling of money comes in that our Hebrew friend ranks *facile princeps*. At the street corner you may see him squatted on the ground, in dirty gown and dishevelled hair, complacently passing through his bony fingers a peck or two of copper "change" in a basket set before him. From the deep recesses of his ample leather wallet, slung across his shoulder to the left, he can produce quite a quantity of silver coins, from dollars down to pieces worth but  $2\frac{1}{2}$ d., which he gives or receives in change at the current rates of the day. Or in the seaports you may see his fellow trudge from house to house, negotiating cheques and bills and what not at a micro-

scopic commission. Or you may see him appear before the Moorish notary with a starveling Arab who has borrowed twenty dollars from him. The poor fellow states that Yakoob has purchased of him thirty dollars' worth of wool, or grain or oil, which he has undertaken to deliver, carriage paid, that day three months. When that day comes, instead of bringing goods, or *returning* the cash, he consents to the signing of a document for forty dollars, to replace the first, and so the ball rolls on, till the presumable value of the pledges entrusted to the usurer is reached, when further extension of time is refused, and the debtor is cast into prison and sold up, or perhaps this is not sufficient, so he dies there. Powerful governors are frequently the debtors, who have borrowed to purchase their post, or to secure it, and often they have a Jewish partner, each playing into the other's hands.

But the highest ambition of the average Jew in Morocco who means to rise in the World is an interpretership to a foreign legation, which not only secures a comfortable living, with unlimited opportunities for "palm oil," but also gives a certain rank and importance which may be made the means of stepping higher. Many of the principal Jewish bankers and merchants of the coast towns owe their present position to this initiatory lift, enjoyed either by themselves or by their fathers, and many occupy foreign vice-consulships. From what has been remarked on their share of the trade, the commercial importance of many of these gentlemen will already have been inferred. Two families have obtained hereditary protection by France and Great Britain respectively, and the others are almost invariably protected in some way. Many are decorated with European honours.

#### CHARACTER.

It is a matter of deep regret that in speaking faithfully of a portion of the grandest nation upon Earth, of a people

among whose finer characters I count so many friends, I am obliged to note one or two serious faults. Let me, therefore, at the outset make it plain that I consider them less as innate qualities than as the outcome of adverse circumstances, as the result of evil surroundings and of great inherent talents misdirected. De Foucauld remarked that the Jews of Morocco "observe with the utmost rigour the external practices of their religion, but conform in nothing to the moral duties which their religion prescribes to them. Not only do they not follow them, but they oppose them." This may be true, generally, with regard to principles of honesty of which both native Moors and Jews—ignorant on the whole as to any but the ceremonial teachings of the Pentateuch—know but little, but it applies far less to social morals. Before condemning them it must be remembered that they have had no chance to do better. Another writer says that the poor Jews believe it no sin to rob Moors and Christians, while the Moors regard their treatment of Christians and Jews in the same light. I have no hesitation in adding, as a rider to this, that many so-called "Christians" consider themselves fully justified in defrauding Moors and Jews. Too many such, equally black themselves, refuse to hear anything good about natives of either class.

I would not have it supposed that in quoting from these authorities I wish to imply that such a character is universally deserved by the Moorish Jews. Though it undoubtedly is so by a large number, there are many who stand out the brighter for surrounding darkness, and whose credit is the greater for the hindrances with which they meet.

In other points I do not think the Moorish Jew is peculiar. He is hospitable, and his family are genial; if his habits are dirty and his probity weak, his morals are the highest in Morocco. With the exception of the disgraceful child-marriages alluded to, he stands as far ahead of the Moor in this, as he is behind him in other respects.

## POLITICAL STATUS AND PROSPECTS.

What has already been recorded of the present condition of the Morocco Jews will have thrown considerable light upon their political status. Strictly speaking they enjoy no status at all under purely Moorish *régime*, for without even the most elementary rights in the native tribunals, and no position of authority in view, they are treated altogether rather as serfs than citizens. Those instances in which their high intelligence and skill have won great power for single individuals have seldom to any extent affected the well-being of the race. Had Morocco remained ever closed to outside influence, had the concessions wrung at intervals from the unwilling Sultans by the European Powers not opened up a pathway for the Jews, their lot would be to-day upon the coast what it still is in the interior. The possibility of sharing foreign rights and privileges has, however, changed all this for those who come within its range. The treaties assuring protection to the native agents of foreign officials and merchants have been taken far greater advantage of by Jews than Moors; firstly, because they feel the need of protection in a higher degree, and secondly, because they are more astute in obtaining it. I am not going here to discuss the indispensable *protégé* system in force to-day in Morocco, but I must point out two of its chief—its typical—abuses, which immediately concern my subject. The one is the purchase of its benefits, which are only really intended for *bon à fide employés*. Since the Jew, whatever his outward circumstances, has always a larger amount of cash than his Moorish neighbour, in proportion as he excels him in point of brain, he here scores a decided advantage, and is able to secure far better protection. The other abuse to which I would refer is the enforcement of unjust claims, and the imprisonment of debtors under the *ægis*, and through the influence, of foreign Powers. Though too many foreigners commit the same abuses, and are equally blameworthy — nay, more so,

on account of their superior education and opportunities of learning better—it is the Hebrew community which, from its numbers, gets credit for the bulk of these misdeeds. The sin of grasping usury, for which, even in the early days of the Exodus, their nation had to be so sternly repreahended, flourishes and cankers in Morocco to the full. I might fill a whole paper by itself with disclosures of the oppression meted out by Jews in that country to their Mohammedan fellow-subjects; I might even go further, and proclaim what grinding of the face of their own poor, more grievous still in its nature, goes on in those semi-civilized Mellahs. But I will not dwell on this unpleasant side of things. Suffice it to hint at what will ever breed retributive oppression from the Moor, incurring, too, the wrath of God.

In Morocco two causes have for centuries acted and reacted one upon the other to produce the existing strained relations between Moors and Jews. The steadfast independence which has cut the latter off from intermixture with the former, and their greed of gain, have fostered enmity and hatred, in a populace itself almost as dishonest, which have brought about reprisals and revenge. These have been repaid with that amount of interest which they would make their victims pay; so fire has kindled fire. The misgovernment of the Empire permits and encourages this sort of thing in a manner unknown in England, though even here that page of history has had its parallel.

It is idle for us to demand emancipation for the Jew unless we are prepared to raise his moral level and to educate his powers. Until dishonesty, as a universal characteristic of the country, gives way to honesty, peace cannot be hoped for. If foreign protection could be secured for every son of Israel in Morocco, it would rather expose them to the fury of the populace, and threaten serious war, than attain its primary objects, if the immediate result were a multiplication of the present holders of that privilege without raising their tone. The

presence among them of civilised and well-instructed men, with the polish and air of Europe, men whom the foreign schools have drawn from their ranks and placed by the side of any European, proves their capabilities, and forms one of the brightest hopes of Morocco. The schools of the Alliance Israélite and those of the Morocco Relief Fund, under the Anglo-Jewish Association, have steadily worked wonders, and they need abundant extension everywhere. Many of the leading citizens of the Moorish ports—not only as members of the despised community, but also as members of their cosmopolitan society—have been their pupils, who have completed their education abroad and returned to honour their nation at home. These, even when poor and unprotected, suffer so little indignity at the hands of the Moors, that they might almost be born Europeans, and in proportion as the whole Jewish population of Morocco can be rendered like them, the greatest inducements to oppression will vanish, and day will have broken on the horizon of the Morocco Jews. O for a Jonah to stir them up, that they may repent ere it be too late ! O for a Samuel to teach and warn them ! They need not only the united political influence on the behalf of their brethren in more favoured lands, to secure from their government what is their due as free-born men, but they need awakening themselves, and raising till they shall be worthy of the pedestal on which we fain would see them.

J. E. BUDGETT MEAKIN.

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